

VZCZCXRO6940
PP RUEHFK
DE RUEHKO #2895 1450524
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 250524Z MAY 06
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2501
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCPDOG/USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION JAPAN-CHINA RELATIONS

- TOKYO

LEAD STORIES: Most Thursday morning papers front-paged Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe's plan to announce his candidacy for the LDP presidential election in September after the G-8 Summit in mid-July.

¶1. "Aso-Li meeting Ends Year-Long Diplomatic Vacuum" The liberal Asahi editorialized:(5/25): "...Japanese Foreign Minister Aso and his Chinese counterpart Li met for the first time in Qatar Tuesday. It was the first China-Japan foreign ministerial in a year. Although Li called for the 'Japanese leader' to refrain from visiting Yasukuni Shrine, he agreed with Aso on the need to promote dialogue and cooperate on such issues as natural gas field development in the East China Sea, security, and cultural exchanges. China and Japan are extremely important to each other economically and in terms of security. Although a summit will be impossible so long as PM Koizumi continues to visit Yasukuni, the two countries agree on the need to minimize the effects of those visits.

¶2. "In the absence of summits or foreign ministerials during the past year, the two countries came to realize that Japan-China relations are important and that the overall relationship should not be destroyed by the Yasukuni issue alone.... Although Japan and China remain unable to hold a summit, both sides have managed to make progress on improving bilateral ties through working-level dialogue. For now, there is no option but to build on this."

SCHIEFFER